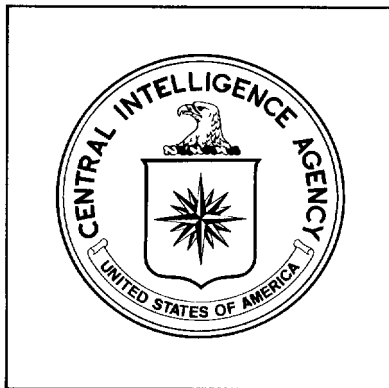


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STAFF NOTES:

Soviet Union Eastern Europe

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Czechoslovakia: Husak's Prospects

Gustav Husak's status as party chief and Czechoslovakia's new President seemingly stamps him as the strongest man in the post-1968 regime. Over the coming months, however, he will be put to the test as he grapples with pressing internal problems and directs preparations for the party congress next spring.

As Husak begins his tenure in the country's two top jobs, several factors argue that he will continue in both posts indefinitely. Husak, who is 62, is apparently in good health, and he has clearly emerged as "first among equals" after several months of intensive internal debates centering on the selection of a successor to former President Svoboda. More important, the fact that Husak won the presidency demonstrates that he has Moscow's endorsement.

The US embassy reports that its diplomatic contacts in Prague are nevertheless generally reluctant to conclude that Husak's position is now unassailable. Indeed, the Central Committee plenum that nominated Husak for the presidency conspicuously avoided removing the incapacitated Svoboda from the Politburo. The delicate balance between moderates and hard liners in the party's ruling body is mentioned, but Husak, himself a moderate, was evidently unable to have his way in naming a suitable successor to Svoboda.

It is also probable that Husak's dual posts will make him increasingly vulnerable to internal critics. He will no longer be able to devote full time to running the party. Moreover, some members of the leadership--rightly or wrongly--can be expected to interpret his elevation to the presidency as a "kick upstairs." Uncertainty about Husak's political strength plus the need eventually to replace Svoboda on the Politburo could lead to jockeying for position, thereby further complicating Husak's efforts to put his personal stamp on the party congress.

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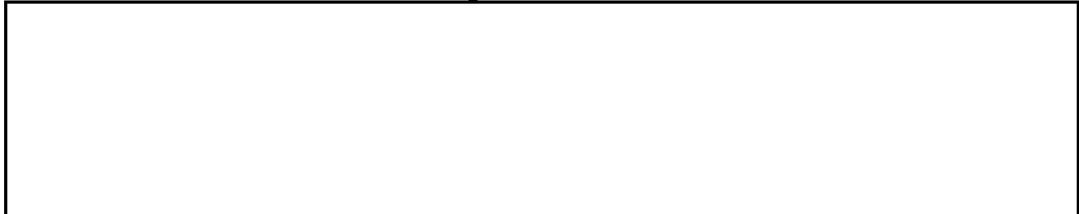
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Husak must also face the knotty problem of healing the wounds of 1968, when as many as 500,000 party members were expelled in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion. Numerous signs indicate that Husak, who favors conciliation, has been engaged in a hot debate with party hard liners, who oppose his efforts to rehabilitate former party members on a case-by-case basis. There are no signs that he has won this struggle.

He also faces the extremely sticky problem of what to do with his predecessor, Alexander Dubcek. Some reports say that Moscow has forbidden Husak either to put Dubcek on trial or to send him into exile. Husak is thus confronted with the dilemma of meeting Moscow's reported demands and still mollifying Dubcek and his supporters. In addition, he must satisfy the revenge-seeking hard liners at home.

On balance, the determining factor in Husak's future will probably be Moscow's appraisal of his performance. Husak will have to be particularly adroit both in living up to Soviet expectations and in establishing political tranquility in a party and a nation still suffering from the shock of 1968.



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Israeli Foreign Minister
Visits Romania

The US embassy reports the Romanians outdid themselves in lavishing hospitality on visiting Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon last week. Bucharest apparently was making a conscious effort to compensate for its extensive contacts with the Arabs of the past few months.

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Pravda Reiterates Procedures for Party Meetings

A recent *Pravda* editorial on the rules of procedure for the plenums held by local party organizations may cause some people to wonder why CPSU Central Committee plenums no longer follow similar procedures. The editorial, published on May 27, is in keeping with the Central Committee resolution in late February criticizing the Tambov Oblast party organization [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It may be a signal of stepped-up political maneuvering in preparation for the party congress next year.

The editorial notes the importance of having a majority of the local party committee take part in the preparations for a plenum, of distributing resumes of the reports in advance to all members of the committee, and of taking all of the members' comments and wishes into consideration when preparing the final draft. The party committee must not only see to it that these reports contain in-depth and objective analysis of the situation, but must also ensure that debate speeches are specific, frank, and principled.

The editorial reminds *Pravda's* readers that the Central Committee resolution on the Tambov party organization had criticized meetings that concentrate on the bright side of things and fail to discuss the major shortcomings of individual institutions or people. It adds that the errors leading to the recent ouster of the party first secretary in Sumy Oblast (in the Ukraine) had been made possible by lack of criticism. Only a few of the more than 2,500 people who had spoken at 318 plenums at the city and district level in Sumy Oblast, the editorial continues, had in recent years made any substantial complaints about the performance of their party committee secretaries or bureaus.

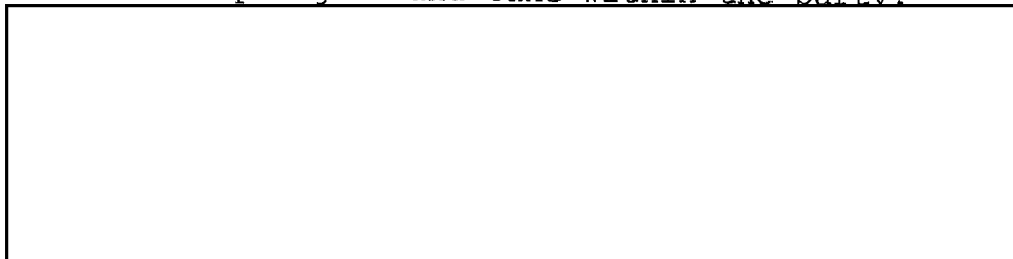
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The editorial complains that plenums often suffer from over-organization, or from monotonous ceremonial speeches that do little to enrich the discussion or elucidate the issues on the agenda. It urges that vacuous speeches, ostentation, and attempts to embellish the situation should not be allowed to go unchallenged, and that justified criticism should be met with corrective measures, not hostility.

The editorial says nothing about shortcomings at the national level, but many of the procedures now viewed as proper for local meetings are very similar to those that were frequently followed at CPSU Central Committee plenums during the Khrushchev period but discarded soon after his ouster in October 1964. It is possible that the editorial, like the decree on the state of affairs in Tambov, is meant to lay the groundwork for a housecleaning of the local party units. It is also possible, however, that some of the top leaders want the next congress to be marked by at least a partial return to a more open give and take within the party.



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Kim in Bulgaria

Kim Il-song's arrival in Sofia on June 2 may have been somewhat awe-inspiring for the Bulgarians. The US embassy reports that Kim's entourage numbered some 300 persons and that 90 vehicles were needed to make the trip from the airport into the city. Party leader Zhivkov's reception for his guests, including a promenade on a rose-strewn square in central Sofia, was described as "warm and friendly, although not excessively so." All members of the top leadership turned out for Kim's arrival and then attended the official dinner party, presided over by Zhivkov.

Although little is known of the substance of the talks between Kim and Zhivkov, the latter has strongly endorsed North Korea's call for Korean reunification and the withdrawal of all "UN troops" from the South. The Bulgarian leader has, however, politely indicated his displeasure at both Kim's independent-minded stance and his nonaligned aspirations by noting that "nowadays the problem of unity and solidarity of the socialist countries... stands out with keen topicality."

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